

# *The very interesting life of CBC's* Vik Adhopia

from Port Credit high school reporter to Health correspondent for *The National*

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Vik Adhopia agrees to do the interview but says with great modesty; “I’m not sure my life is all that interesting.” This is coming from the award-winning National Health Reporter for CBC’s *The National* who has reported from the front lines of the war in Afghanistan, flew in a Chinook helicopter to see an iceberg off the coast of Newfoundland, and is a regular Washington Bureau news fill-in. When he was a cub reporter on the Port Credit High School newspaper, never in his wildest dreams did he imagine he would be a regular fixture on a TV network news show.

“I got into writing for the school newspaper in grade nine or ten, originally because of music, as I wrote a couple of record reviews,” says Vik. “Someone in the higher grades wrote a parody on niners (grade nine students), so I was kind of incensed and wrote a rebuttal about people in higher grades, and that was one of my introductions to writing.”

Vik earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science from U of T and then studied Journalism at Ryerson. He began his career at CBC Toronto, worked for a summer in Regina and Saskatoon, and in 1997 he was invited to fill in for a position in Iqaluit. “I got out my atlas (pre-internet days) and started searching for Iqaluit and couldn’t find it on the map!” says Vik. “You have two choices when you go to a place like this; you either embrace the Arctic or you buy the full cable package!”

Vik embraced the arctic, bought a snowmobile and outdoor gear. “It was a total life-changing experience for a kid from Mississauga,” laughs Vik. “The other major thing was that I met my wife Andrea up there, and by a weird coinci-

dence, she was from Brampton.”

Vik and Andrea moved to Prince George, B.C. and then to Vancouver, where their son Kirin was born. In 2006, Vik and his family moved across the country to Newfoundland when Vik joined CBC St. John’s as a National Reporter for CBC News. He and his son took up Aikido martial arts and once again, Vik embraced his new surroundings. “We’d go hiking in Gros Morne National Park or head to the seashore. We travelled all over the province and discovered these little communities where you really don’t know which decade or century you are in, except for maybe the vehicles.”

Fast forward to today when Vik navigates his bike through busy Toronto traffic during his daily 14 kilometre round trip commute to the CBC headquarters where he is now a National Health Reporter with the CBC Health Unit. “Covering the health beat can sometimes be tiresome to my family as it leads to a lot of debate in my household,” laughs Vik.

One of the hottest topics to cover in health news is weight loss, according to Vik. “I have seen so many studies and it basically boils down to getting enough exercise, eating moderate portions and focusing on fruits and vegetables. When I walk over to the vending machine at CBC and buy a bag of chips I get a few judgement looks—’oh the health reporter is buying chips. You learn all of these things but trying to apply them to your own life is actually kind of tough.”

Vik has won several awards, including a Radio and Television News Directors Association Award for his coverage of the Newfoundland Breast Cancer Scandal. “This led to an inquiry and public policy changes, and in part those changes came, or the story broke as a result of CBC’s inquiry—not



me alone—but a team of people who worked at making that story public. As a journalist, for me at least, that is one of the things you aspire to; you want to tell great stories, but if it leads to making a bit of a change for the better, then that is a bonus.”

Vik ventures into some testy waters as he periodically acts as a Washington news correspondent for CBC. “We

have about three Washington correspondents and for the last 10 years I get called on to go there, so this is the third president I’ve covered.”

Remaining objective is a priority when covering the political scene.

“You have to focus on the policy decision he (President Trump) makes and the evidence he uses for that and try to

be objective,” explains Vik. “The last story I did was about climate change and how he wants to pull the U.S. out of the Paris agreement. He cited some evidence which was pretty flimsy, but the thing that stood out for me was that he wouldn’t say that human activity is the main cause of climate change, which the evidence says. If you ask anyone in his administration; ‘Does the President believe that climate change is real and that human activity is responsible?’ they could not answer that question, and that’s something you just have to report.”

Vik has not met President Trump and mentions that the President is not readily accessible to the media. “He does not take questions from the media very often; it’s usually through his spokespeople or his advisors,” explains Vik. “When you cover Washington, there are different levels of credentials and only a select few get the coveted seats in that room to cover White House press conferences. I’m not a White House correspondent; that’s different than a Washington correspondent.”

What’s Vik’s take on fake news?

“Fake news or false stories have always been there, but with the proliferation of social media, the ease by which you

can make fake news is astounding,” states Vik. “The irony is that Donald Trump was one of the first to coin the phrase, but people are more aware and are willing to call it out. The funny thing is that in health news, you can almost say that we’ve always had fake news; very weak studies that may not be supported by the evidence. What people don’t realize is that covering the health beat, every day there are hundreds of studies that come out and are being pitched to the media and some of them are not great quality studies. With health stories you have to figure out if the science is verifiable, if the parties involved have any conflict of interest, if it builds on an existing body of work; that’s a way to filter through it. If we can’t verify it, we won’t run it because it’s our own credibility as an organization that’s at risk.”

You may see Vik and his family trekking around Mississauga. “We are often there visiting my parents who still live in the same house where I grew up,” smiles Vik. Aside from visiting his folks, when asked about his favourite thing to do in Mississauga, Vik answers: “I always find myself at the restaurants in the strip malls at Highway 5 and 10, where honestly I think it’s the best deals for some of the best food in the country.” 🍴

